ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM
November 30 - December 1, 2023

When Media Put Social Justice at Risk

ANNENBERG CENTER FOR
Collaborative Communication

CENTER FOR
MEDIA
@RISK

CENTER FOR MEDIA AT RISK

We are in uncharted waters. Intimidation threatens media practitioners worldwide, and disinformation campaigns destabilize public trust. The Center for Media at Risk offers the chance to strategize in response to the multiple risks facing media practitioners globally. Knowing how media practitioners work under the uneven power dynamics posed by authoritarian, racist, misogynist, homophobic, classist and settler-colonialist regimes can help free/defend/empower/protect/save the media.

CENTER DIRECTOR: Barbie Zelizer
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ANNENBERG CENTER FOR COLLABORATIVE COMMUNICATION (C3)

Annenberg C3 enables scholars to think and work across institutional, geographic and disciplinary divides. Jointly established by the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism and the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication, the center's faculty, postdoctoral fellows and doctoral students seek to address emerging global issues broadly across the field of communication and media. The first-of-its-kind center not only explores what "collaboration" means for the field of communication and media, but also provides critical infrastructure for reimagining and potentially revolutionizing how collaborative communication can be used to address complex issues such as health care, data privacy, cultural and demographic change, politics, new media, gender/racial equity and justice, media literacy and policy, journalistic trust and the restructuring of media industries in an evolving age of streaming and networked distribution.

CENTER DIRECTOR: Sarah Banet-Weiser
ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR: Danielle Wolfson
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When Media Put
Social Justice at Risk

Media platforms are often optimistically positioned as relatively generative opportunities for social justice campaigns because of lower barriers of entry and heightened visibility. But these opportunities are also often shaped by opposition, contradiction and even violence, resulting in inequitable political-economic and legal infrastructures, misogynistic and racialized media practices and dangerous polarizations.

This symposium addresses the contradictory ways in which media platforms can result in intentional or accidental thwarting of social justice, as well as the ways in which media platforms can assist and extend social justice efforts.

SYMPOSIUM PROGRAM

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30

5:00-5:30PM   LIGHT RECEPTION

5:30-5:45PM   WELCOME + INTRODUCTION

5:45-7:15PM   **KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

Wesley Lowery: *The Role of the Press in a Multiracial Democracy*

7:15-8:30PM   RECEPTION

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1

9:30-10:00AM   BREAKFAST

10:00-10:15AM   INTRODUCTION

10:15-11:45AM   **PANEL ONE: CONTEXT**

Media are created, experienced and understood within a broad social, cultural, political and economic context. What are some of the contextual factors of the media that can put social justice at risk? What are some of the contextual factors of the media that might allow for expanding and enhancing social justice efforts?

Alicia Bell: *Media Reparations* 🤝 *Multi-racial Democracy*
Alison Hearn: *High Tech Pauperism: How Financial Technology Threatens Social Justice*
Kelli Moore: *Tableaux of Justice*
Allissa Richardson: *Canceled: How Smartphones and Social Media Democratized Public Shaming*

Moderator: Cienna Davis

11:45-1:00PM   LUNCH

1:00–2:30PM   **PANEL TWO: CONDITIONS**

Media platforms are often shaped by the political-economic and legal conditions that support them. How do these conditions exacerbate or intensify the media's capacity to put social justice at risk? Are there alternative conditions that might enhance the media's efforts toward social justice?

Natalie Fenton: *Imagining New Democratic Possibilities for Communicative Justice*
Gholam Khiabany: *The Rise and Fall of 'Self' on Social Media*
Wazhmah Osman:*Thinking Through the Political Economy of War Imagery in a Comparative Perspective*

Moderator: Louisa Lincoln

2:30–2:45PM   REFRESHMENTS

2:45–4:15PM   **PANEL THREE: CONSEQUENCES**

What are the consequences of putting social justice at risk and how might the media position themselves more productively to embolden social justice initiatives? Are these consequences mainly focused on the individual user's level, or can we imagine broader and more liberatory structural consequences?

André Brock: *Of Digital Diasporas and Private Publics*
Yoel Roth: *Collective Insecurity: The Consequences of Platform Failure and Federation*
Francesca Tripodi: *Unraveling the Web: Worldviews, Corporate Interests and Reproductive Healthcare Access in Online Searches*
Lewis Raven Wallace: *Grassroots Media as an Antidote to "Both Sides-ism"*

Moderator: Valentina Proust

4:15–4:45PM   CLOSING REMARKS

4:45–6:00PM   RECEPTION

SARAH BANET-WEISER (she/her) is the Walter H. Annenberg Dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania and its Lauren Berlant Professor of Communication. In addition, she is a research professor at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism and the founding director of the Center for Collaborative Communication at the Annenberg Schools (C3). Her teaching and research interests include gender in the media, identity, citizenship and cultural politics, consumer culture and popular media, race and the media and intersectional feminism. She has authored or edited eight books, including the award-winning *AuthenticTM: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture* (NYU Press, 2012) and *Empowered: Popular Feminism and Popular Misogyny* (Duke, 2018), and dozens of peer-reviewed articles, book chapters and essays. Her latest book (co-authored with Kathryn Higgins), *Believability: Sexual Violence, Media, and the Politics of Doubt* (Polity, 2023), explores the convergence of the #MeToo movement and the crisis of post-truth.

ALICIA BELL (they/she) is Director of the Racial Equity in Journalism Fund at Borealis Philanthropy and a nationally recognized expert in community engagement, media repair and BIPOC journalism. They came to this role as an extension of their work creating repair and restitution in media systems. Previously, they worked at the intersection of media and organizing at Free Press and in 2020 co-founded Media 2070, a consortium of media-makers and activists aiming to radically transform who has the capital to tell their own stories and highlight how media can serve as a lever for racial justice. Bell's work is informed by their lived experiences as a Black, Queer, Non-Binary parent, elder caretaker, sibling to an incarcerated/formerly incarcerated sister and land steward in Charlotte, NC.

ANDRÉ BROCK (he/him) is an Associate Professor of Media Studies at Georgia Institute of Technology. He writes on Western technoculture and Black cybercultures; his scholarship examines race in social media, video games, blogs and other digital media. His book, *Distributed Blackness: African American Cybercultures* (NYU Press 2020), theorizes Black everyday lives mediated by networked technologies and was recently named one of the "Top Tech Books of All Time" by *The Verge*. It is also the 2021 winner of the Harry Shaw and Katrina Hazzard-Donald Award for Outstanding Work in African-American Popular Culture Studies and the 2021 Association of Internet Researchers Nancy Baym Book Award.

NATALIE FENTON (she/her) is a Professor of Media Communications and Co-Director of the Centre for the Study of Global Media and Democracy at Goldsmiths, University of London. Fenton is currently a Visiting Scholar with the Annenberg Center for Collaborative Communication (C3). She has published widely on issues relating to civil society, radical politics, digital media, news and journalism and is particularly interested in issues of political transformation, radical media reform and re-imagining democracy. She served as Vice-chair of the Board of Directors of the campaign group Hacked Off for seven years and is a founding member and former Chair of the UK Media Reform Coalition. She is also on the Board of Declassified UK, an investigative journalism website for in-depth analysis on British foreign policy.

ALISON HEARN (she/her) is a Professor of Media Studies in the Faculty of Information and Media Studies at the University of Western Ontario. She is currently a Visiting Scholar with the Annenberg Center for Collaborative Communication (C3). Hearn is a media theorist and academic labor activist who studies the convergence between identity, sociality, technology, culture and capitalism. She also writes about the university as a cultural and political site. She has published widely on these issues in such journals as *Social Media + Society*, *Cultural Studies* and J*ournal of Consumer Culture*, and in edited volumes including *The Media and Social Theory* and *Commodity Activism*. She is co-author of *Outside the Lines: Issues in Interdisciplinary Research* and co-editor of *Organizing Equality: Dispatches from a Global Struggle*. Previously, she served as the Chair of the Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT).
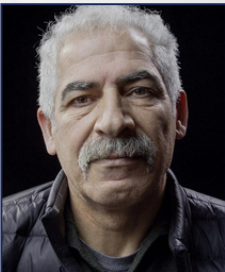
GHOLAM KHIABANY (he/him) teaches in the Department of Media, Communications and Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London. His academic career has focused on the relationship between citizenship, political activism and media and cultural practices, including alternative media. He is the author of *Iranian Media: The Paradox of Modernity* (Routledge, 2010) and *Blogistan*, co-authored with Annabelle Sreberny (I.B.Tauris, 2010), and the co-editor of *Liberalism in Neoliberal Times: Dimensions, Contradictions, Limits* and of *After Charlie Hebdo: Terror, Racism and Free Speech*. His latest book is *The Handbook of Media and Culture in the Middle East* (2023), co-edited with Joe Khalil, Tourya Guaaybess and Bilge Yesil.

WESLEY LOWERY (he/him) is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, author and on-air correspondent. He is the executive editor of the Investigative Reporting Workshop, a non-profit newsroom based at American University. He is also a contributing editor at The Marshall Project and a Journalist in Residence at the CUNY Newmark Graduate School of Journalism. In nearly a decade as a national correspondent, Lowery has specialized in issues of race, justice and law enforcement. He led the *Washington Post* team awarded the Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting in 2016 for the creation and analysis of a real-time database to track fatal police shootings in the United States. His project, "Murder with Impunity," an unprecedented look at unsolved homicides in major American cities, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 2019. His first book, *They Can't Kill Us All: Ferguson, Baltimore, and a New Era in America's Racial Justice Movement*, was a *New York Times* bestseller and awarded the Christopher Isherwood Prize for Autobiographical Prose by the *LA Times* Book Prizes. His second book, *American Whitelash*, was released in June 2023 and was an instant *New York Times* bestseller.

KELLI MOORE (she/her) is an Associate Professor of Media, Culture, Communication at NYU, whose research focuses on Black Studies, Critical Legal Studies, Rhetoric and Visual Culture Studies. Her monograph, *Legal Spectatorship: Slavery and the Visual Culture of Domestic Violence* (Duke, 2022), is a study of courtroom mediation and the role of photographic evidence in facilitating the performance of witness testimony in domestic violence cases. The book draws on the history of slavery, US Constitutional law and visual culture to analyze courtroom rhetorical practices within ongoing debates about trauma, cybernetics, facilitated communication, feminist jurisprudence, visual literacy and abolition. Other writing may be found at *Anglistica*, *Black Camera*, *Feminist Surveillance Studies* (edited volume), *Journal of Visual Culture*, *International Journal of Communication*, *Law and the Visible* (edited volume), *Meridians*, *Parapraxis* and First Monday.

WAZHMAH OSMAN (she/her) is a filmmaker and an Associate Professor in the Klein College of Media and Communication at Temple University. Her book, *Television and the Afghan Culture Wars: Brought to You by Foreigners, Warlords, and Activists* (University of Illinois Press, 2020), analyzes the impact of international funding and cross-border media flows on the culture and politics of Afghanistan, the region and beyond. She is also the co-director of *Postcards from Tora Bora* (Documentary Educational Resources, 2007) and co-author of the forthcoming book *Afghanistan: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University). She has appeared as a commentator on *Democracy Now*, *NPR* and *Al Jazeera* and works with community and activist groups. She is currently a joint visiting scholar with the Center for Media at Risk and the Center for Advanced Research in Global Communication (CARGC).

ALLISSA RICHARDSON (she/her) is an Associate Professor of Journalism at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School, where she is the Founding Director of the Charlotta Bass Journalism and Justice Lab. Richardson's research examines how African Americans use mobile and social media to produce innovative forms of journalism — especially in times of crisis. Her research on Black citizen journalism has been published in *Journal of Communication*, *Digital Journalism*, *Journalism Studies* and many other venues, and she is a frequent commentator for news outlets such as ABC, BBC, CBC, *Columbia Journalism Review*, *Los Angeles Times*, MSNBC, *NPR*, *Teen Vogue* and *Vox*. She is the author of *Bearing Witness While Black: African Americans*, *Smartphones and the New Protest #Journalism* (Oxford University Press, 2020).

YOEL ROTH (he/him) is a Knight Visiting Scholar with the Center for Media at Risk at the University of Pennsylvania, a Technology Policy Fellow at UC Berkeley and a Non-Resident Scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. His research and writing focus on trustworthy governance approaches for social media, AI and other emerging technologies. Previously, he was the Head of Trust & Safety at Twitter. For more than 7 years, he led the teams responsible for Twitter's content moderation, integrity and platform security efforts, including policy development, threat investigation, product, design, research and operations. Before joining Twitter, Yoel received his Ph.D from the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, where his research and teaching examined the technical, policy, business and cultural dynamics of social networking and dating apps at the dawn of the "App Store" age.

FRANCESCA TRIPODI (she/her) is an Assistant Professor at the School of Information and Library Science and a Principal Investigator at the Center for Information Technology and Public Life at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has twice testified before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, explaining how relevance is gamed to drive ideologically based queries and spread conspiratorial logic. In addition to her research on search engines, Dr. Tripodi's work has documented how cis-gender females who meet the threshold for inclusion on Wikipedia are nearly twice as likely to be considered non-notable subjects than their cis-male peers. In 2023, Dr. Tripodi received the Award for Impact and Excellence from the Center for an Informed Public at the University of Washington in recognition of her research on fostering an informed society.

LEWIS RAVEN-WALLACE (they/ze/he) is an award-winning independent journalist based in Durham, North Carolina. He is the author of *The View from Somewhere: Undoing the Myth of Journalistic Objectivity* (University of Chicago Press, 2019) and the host of The View from Somewhere podcast. He previously worked in public radio and is a long-time activist engaged in prison abolition, racial justice and queer and trans liberation. Currently a Movement Journalism Fellow with Interrupting Criminalization, he works with abolitionist activists on journalism and narrative strategy. He is also a 2021 Ford Global Fellow, a 2020 Knight Visiting Nieman Fellow and a cofounder in 2018 of Press On, a southern movement journalism collective. Wallace is white and transgender and was born and raised in the Midwest with deep roots in the South.

BARBIE ZELIZER (she/her) is the Raymond Williams Professor of Communication and Director of the Center for Media at Risk at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication. A former journalist, Zelizer is known for her work on journalism, crisis, culture, memory and images. She has authored/edited fifteen books and over 150 articles/essays. Recipient of multiple fellowships, including the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the British Academy, her work has appeared in national and global media. Coeditor of *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism*, she is past President of the International Communication Association. Her most recent book is *The Journalism Manifesto* (2021, with Pablo Boczkowski and C.W. Anderson), and she is now working on *How the Cold War Drives the News*.

STUDENT PLANNING COMMITTEE

This symposium was organized by the following group of doctoral students at the Annenberg School for Communication:

ANJALI DASSARMA holds a masters degree in American Studies from Brown University and is a member of the Center for Media at Risk Steering Committee. Her research meets at the junction of community and journalistic practices, race, historiography and equity, inspired by scholars like Michel-Rolph Trouillot. Her work examines both the cultural studies and political economy of journalism, centering journalists as actors in the production of knowledge, norms and history as well as structures of media power, capitalism and hegemony.

CIENNA DAVIS utilizes performance ethnography to engage Afro-textured hair as a language and communication network. She is interested in digital embodiment and transnational Black feminist modes of techno- vernacular creativity. Davis' research also examines the role of digital technology and the Internet in transforming processes of racialization and racial identity formation, with recent publications on digital blackface and the appropriation of Black femme affect, gesture and movement online.

SIM GILL's research interests center predominately around concerns mediating violence against women and girls, the social and subjective effects of this discourse and the institutional politics that frame such positioning. She is also interested in the interrelationships between discourse, epistemology and subjectivity that speak to the broader shaping of a market for women's safety.

EMILIE GRYBOS' research focuses on the evolving, dynamic relationship between developing technology, access and communication to inform long-term implications for global democracy and balances of economic, social and technological power. With her unique background in both engineering and Gender Studies, Grybos' interests are driven by a desire to unpack power dynamics and the interactions of and communication through systems of individuals enabled by technology.

LOUISA LINCOLN's research examines sustainable funding models for journalism, with a focus on nonprofit news and public media organizations in the United States. She is also interested in the intersection of media policy and journalism funding and the relationship between nonprofit newsrooms and their philanthropic funders. Lincoln was a 2022 COMPASS Fellow at the American Journalism Project and a 2021-2022 Lipman Family Prize Fellow. She currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism.

SOPHIE MADDOCKS is a researcher, teacher and digital rights advocate. Particularly concerned with cyber-sexual violence, she has published research on image-based abuse (commonly misnamed "revenge porn"), deep fakes and gender-based trolling. Her current work examines individual, organizational and legislative responses to image-based sexual abuse. Through Fellowships at the Netter Center for Community Partnerships and the Center for Media at Risk, she conducts research that's qualitative, participatory and youth-led.

VALENTINA PROUST's research observes how marginalized communities are represented in media and how they create discourses of resistance against hegemonic narratives. With a particular emphasis on gender issues within the Global South, her work delves into the influence of cultural traumas on these communities, exploring how such traumas shape collective memory and identity formation and contribute to fostering solidarity, activism and social justice. She is also interested in exploring the construction of the "Latin American identity" within media and its associated stereotypes.

JEANNA SYBERT studies the ongoing threats to journalism as an institution. She is particularly interested in how journalists navigate and make sense of these challenges as they work. Her dissertation approaches these issues through the lenses of journalistic precarity, labor and emotionality. The project—which examines a clustering of recent critical incidents—investigates the cascading impacts of an increasingly precarious occupation for journalists, the institution of journalism and the broader information landscape.

INTERLOCUTORS

Fabienne Darling-Wolf, Professor of Media and Communication, Klein College of Media and Communication, Temple University

Mary Ebeling, Associate Professor of Sociology, Affiliate Faculty at the Center for Science, Technology and Society, Drexel University

Emily Edwards, Assistant Professor of Digital Humanities and Educational Technologist, St. Francis College

Kathryn Higgins, Lecturer in Global Digital Politics, Goldsmiths, University of London

Sarah Jackson, Presidential Associate Professor, Co-Director, Media, Inequality & Change Center, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania

Perry B. Johnson, Lecturer, Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, University of Southern California

Lexi McMenamin, Freelance Reporter, News & Politics Editor, *Teen Vogue*

Rahul Mukherjee, Wolf Associate Professor of Television and New Media Studies, Associate Professor of English, University of Pennsylvania

Carla Murphy, Assistant Professor of Journalism, Department of Arts, Culture and Media, Rutgers University–Newark

Caitlin Petre, Associate Professor of Journalism and Media Studies, School of Communication and Information, Rutgers University

Victor Pickard, Professor of Media Policy and Political Economy, Co-Director, Media, Inequality & Change Center, Annenberg Center for Communication, University of Pennsylvania

Aswin Punathambekar, Professor of Communication, Director, Center for Advanced Research in Global Communication, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania

Joseph Torres, Senior Advisor of Reparative Policy and Programs, Free Press

Hilde Van den Bulck, Professor and Department Head of Communication Studies, Drexel University

Silvio Waisbord, Professor and Director, School of Media and Public Affairs, George Washington University

Andrea D. Wenzel, Assistant Professor of Journalism, Klein College of Media and Communication, Temple University

Guobin Yang, Professor of Communication and Sociology, Director, Center on Digital Culture and Society, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania

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